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Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Note verbale dated 4 June 2004 from the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to transmit the attached letter from the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, concerning the outcomes of the Special Leaders' Retreat of the Pacific Islands Forum, held in Auckland on 6 April 2004 (see annex). The Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated to Member States.

* A/59/50 and Corr.1.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 4 June 2004 from the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter dated 13 May 2004 from the Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum. Last year I chaired the 34th annual meeting of Heads of Government of the Pacific Island Countries. One of the major outcomes from that meeting was a commitment by Leaders to revitalize regional cooperation through a review of the functioning of the Forum itself, and of its supporting bureaucracy, especially the Suva-based Forum Secretariat.

Forum leaders met in New Zealand on 6 April for a special Summit to consider the findings of the now completed review. The decisions taken by Leaders on the review are likely to have far-reaching implications for the Forum region over the next decade, and for the region's engagement with other international bodies. Accordingly, I would like to take this opportunity to bring our decisions to your attention. In summary:

- Leaders have agreed to a Pacific Vision statement that sets the region on a new path of enhanced regional cooperation. The Vision statement is optimistic in outlook but also recognizes that a weakness in one country can become a risk for all in the region.

- The Vision statement will be elaborated through the development of a Pacific Plan. This ambitious undertaking will intensify cooperation between the sovereign countries of the region. It will identify how better sharing of resources and alignment of policies will improve the well-being of the region.

- Work will begin right away with an assessment by Forum governments and the Forum's Secretary General of opportunities for additional regional cooperation, to be considered in the first instance by Forum leaders when we gather for our annual meeting in August.

- Leaders have confirmed that the key goals of the Forum are economic growth, sustainable development, good governance, and security. Forum leaders have also stressed that they have a particular interest in the preservation of Pacific cultures and languages.

- Improvements will be made to the Post Forum Dialogue, an annual opportunity for senior Ministers and officials of 12 countries and groupings from outside the Pacific to meet representatives of the Forum.

Leaders also endorsed a series of recommendations that will make the Forum organization more effective. For your information I have enclosed a copy of the Review report "Pacific Cooperation: Voices of the Region", as well as the Auckland Declaration (see enclosure I) and associated list of Leaders' Decisions from the Auckland meeting (see enclosure II).

I am confident that the decisions taken by Pacific Islands Forum leaders will enhance our region's stability, growth and cooperation in the years ahead. We want to work closely with those bodies that have an interest in the region in achieving the goals of the Pacific Vision, and I welcome the ongoing engagement and interest of the United Nations as we pursue our shared goals for the region.

(*Signed*) Helen **Clark**
Prime Minister and Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum

Enclosure I

Pacific Islands Forum
Special Leaders' Retreat

Auckland
6 April 2004

The Auckland Declaration

Leaders of Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated states of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand (Chair), Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu met in Auckland, New Zealand on 6 April 2004 to consider the Forum Eminent Persons' Group review of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Recalling their decision at the 34th Pacific Islands Forum in Auckland to task an Eminent Persons Group to carry out a review of the Forum and its Secretariat, and their direction that the review propose a refreshed mandate and vision for the Pacific Islands Forum, as well as an improved capacity allowing the Forum to provide leadership on regional cooperation and integration;

recalling their agreement that the serious challenges facing countries of the region warranted serious and careful examination of the pooling of scarce regional resources to strengthen national capabilities;

noting that the peoples of the Pacific are the custodians of the largest, most peaceful and abundant ocean, its many islands and its rich diversity of cultures;

believing that the strengthening of Pacific cultures and languages in the face of external pressures should be a central concern for Forum Leaders;

paying tribute to and reaffirming the wisdom of the Forum founders in recognising the advantages to all Pacific people of close cooperation and shared purpose;

recognising the substantial and many achievements of the Forum and its associated agencies over the last 33 years since it first met in Wellington in 1971, its contribution to the development of a Pacific regional consciousness and endeavour, and consolidating its position as the pre-eminent political grouping in the region;

recognising that in a fast changing, complex and unpredictable global environment, it is timely to refresh the Forum to preserve relevance and allow it to continue to provide leadership to the region.

Leaders adopted the following vision:

> *Leaders believe the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives. We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed. We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the*

quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights. We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all.

Leaders agreed to give effect to this vision through:

i. development of the Pacific Plan. This would create stronger and deeper links between the sovereign countries of the region and identify the sectors where the region could gain the most from sharing resources of governance and aligning policies. It would provide a strategy for implementation;

ii. agreement that the key goals of the Forum are economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security and that these goals should form the principal focus of the Forum and its Secretariat;

iii. recognition that a fundamental role of the Forum is to support the particular needs of Small Island States and to advocate their interests, especially in regard to their limited capacity and protecting their fragile environment, including from climate change;

iv. recognition that the Forum has to exist for the practical benefit of Pacific people, and of the importance of cultural identity, regional inclusiveness, sub-regional representation, human rights, women and gender, youth, and civil society and invited the Secretary General, in preparing the Pacific Plan, to consult, assess and make proposals on how cultural identity could be best strengthened through the work of the Forum and CROP agencies, in particular the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC);

v. improvement of the way the Forum communicates its work to member countries and the wider world;

vi. reform of the Forum's procedures, its meetings, and the role of Leaders, the Chair, Ministers and officials.

Leaders recognised that the work required on taking forward these commitments to achieve the Pacific vision will form the heart of Forum work over the next decade.

Leaders agreed that it would be appropriate from time to time for the Forum Leaders' Meeting to revisit the vision and assess progress towards its achievement.

Enclosure II

Pacific Islands Forum
Special Leaders' Retreat

Auckland
6 April 2004

Leaders' Decisions

Leaders agreed to:

A Pacific Vision

1. Adopt the following Vision as a guide to Forum actions and policies.

   Leaders believe the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives. We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed. We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights. We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all.

The Pacific Plan

2. Endorse and lead the development of the Pacific Plan, intended to create stronger and deeper links between the countries of the region. The Plan should:

   Assess options and provide a strategy for deeper and broader regional cooperation, taking into account the broader international environment and agreements in which Forum members participate.

   Identify the sectors and issues in which the region can gain the most from sharing resources of governance and aligning policies.

   Provide clear recommendations to Leaders on the sequence and priorities for intensified regional cooperation.

   Be used as a springboard for stimulating debate on how to shape the region's longer-term future.

   Be carried out by a Task Force of people from within the region, managed by the Secretary General.

   Be overseen in the first instance by a core group of Leaders (comprising the immediate past, current and incoming chairs and a representative of the Smaller Island States), this composition to be reviewed after each Forum.

Be started as soon as possible. The Forum Secretariat to complete an assessment of existing mechanisms and processes for regional cooperation in time for the 2004 Apia Forum, along with draft terms of reference and recommendations from the Secretary General for membership of the Task Force.

3. Develop a digital strategy for the region, based on the 1999 Communications Action Plan.

Forum tasks and themes

4. Define the key goals of the Forum as economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security and that these goals should form the principal focus of the Forum and its Secretariat.

5. Give the greatest possible support to maintaining and increasing efforts by the Forum Secretariat to enhance the governance capabilities of Forum members and Forum-related agencies.

6. Mandate the Secretary General, in consultation with the Chair, to call a meeting of Leaders or Forum Foreign Ministers in times of crisis with a view to galvanising regional action.

7. Endorse the proposal that the maintenance and strengthening of cultural identity be a core theme for Forum leaders.

8. Encourage closer contacts with non-sovereign Pacific territories, through progressively granting them observer status at Leaders' meetings and associated meetings of the Forum Officials' Committee. New criteria for participation should be developed, grounded in the region's interests.

Other Recommendations

9. Encourage the development of national human rights machinery. This might involve engagement with the Asia Pacific Human Rights Forum.

10. Address the low participation of women in all levels of decision-making processes and structures, as well as the reduction and elimination of domestic violence, and the improvement of women's literacy and health status.

11. Listen to the needs and aspirations of the burgeoning population of young people in the region, and recognise the impact of bigger and more youthful populations on the resources required for education and vocational training, healthcare, and job opportunities.

12. Strengthen Forum engagement with civil society. The Secretary General could be asked to discuss options for this with representatives of regional civil society. One option could be for civil society to organise a forum just prior to the Leaders' meeting with a report conveyed to Leaders via the Secretary General.

13. Task the Secretary General with developing a Forum Secretariat communications and publicity strategy with a view to strengthening links

between the Secretariat and members, and also between the Secretariat and Forum Dialogue partners and agencies, both regional and international.

14. Encourage good stewardship of existing funds by the Forum Secretariat, while recognising that the proposed Pacific Plan may impose additional financial demands.

The Leaders' Meeting

15. Task the Secretary General or a delegate with consulting in member capitals several months prior to the annual Leaders' meeting and developing a short Retreat agenda list

16. Require Ministers and CROP heads to provide only written reports to Plenary sessions unless Leaders decide otherwise.

17. Retain the system of annual, alphabetical rotational Leaders' meetings in member countries, with the option of hosting them at the Form Secretariat headquarters in Suva if requested by the host country.

The Role of the Chair

18. Assist the Chair to play a proactive role in taking a strong regional leadership role, in respect of agreed Forum responsibilities and positions, including on the international stage. The country acting as Forum Chair to be responsible for organising a caucus before major international meetings to assess common ground among Forum countries.

19. Authorise Secretariat support for the Chair, as and when requested.

The Post-Forum Dialogue

20. Maintain and build on the 2003 precedent of a post-Forum briefing of Dialogue Partners by the Chair.

21. Revise the panel system to ensure that panelists are able to concentrate exclusively on the Dialogue process. Panel members should be chosen – on the basis of recommendations from the Secretary General to the Chair – from among Forum Ministers.

The Forum Officials' Committee

22. Mandate Forum Ministerial meetings with decision-making power on all issues except those where Ministers determine that a decision by Leaders is required. Leaders would of course retain the right to reconsider issues.

23. Set a date for the main FOC meeting that is about three weeks before the Leaders' gathering rather than just a few days before as at present.

24. Keep in mind the option of holding the main FOC meeting in Suva, unless the incoming Chair urges that it be held in the Forum host country.

25. Bring forward the budget-setting FOC meeting so that resources can be better aligned with tasks set by Leaders.

The Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific

26. Task the Secretary General, in consultation with CROP heads, with ascertaining whether a redrafting of the CROP Charter would help to define more clearly the relationships between CROP agencies, the Forum Secretariat and the Secretary General. The aim of any change would be to ensure that the most effective use is made of the scarce resources of the region.

The Forum Secretariat

27. Authorise the early appointment of a second Deputy Secretary General to improve the capacity of the Secretariat and enable the Secretary General to take up a more proactive regional role in support of the Chair.

28. Appoint a working group of Forum members to draft a new Agreement that updates and clearly sets down the role, functions and responsibilities of the Secretariat. In particular, the document should emphasise that the primary roles of the Secretariat are policy advice, coordination and assistance in implementing Leaders' decisions, rather than the project implementation and technical assistance functions that it has acquired over the years.

29. Task the Secretary General with developing a corporate plan that identifies the resources and structure necessary to carry out the functions of the Secretariat, as well as ensuring that the Secretariat has effective budget, performance management and corporate planning systems.

30. Task the Secretary General with ensuring that the considerable needs of Small Island members are mainstreamed into all levels of Secretariat work.

31. Enforce the provision that Secretariat executive/professional staff be hired for no more than two three-year terms of employment at the Secretariat, so that people with skills developed at the Secretariat can use these skills in the service of their home countries. It may be necessary to offer the Secretary General a transition period in which to apply this provision to current staff.

The Secretary General

32. Encourage the Secretary General to take a proactive role in setting Forum agendas and coordinating responses by members to regional events, particularly crises. Such action would need to be taken in close consultation with the Chair and within limits set by Leaders.

Forum Smaller Island States Sub-Group

33. Warmly encourage the Republic of Palau to consider becoming a member of the Smaller Island States sub-group of the Forum at an early opportunity.